

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

66011

DRAFTED BY S/S-O:RBELL

APPROVED BY S/S-O:RGAMBLE

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O 101603Z JUL 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO CINCUSNAVEUR IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 171437

EXDIS MILITARY ADEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEATS BEIRUT 6084 (DTG 101227Z JUL 76) ACTION
SECSTATE INFO LONDON

QUOTE S E C R E T BEIRUT 6084

EXDIS

MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

DEPARTMENT PASS INFO CINCUSNAVEUR AND USCINCEUR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: AEMR, UK, LE

SUBJECT: BRITISH CONCERN OVER DETERIORATING SITUATION IN LEBANON

REF: LONDON 10703

1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR, PETER WAKEFIELD, HAS SHARED WITH ME HIS
CONCERNS RE DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION IN LEBANON. HE HAS
FORESEEN, AS HAVE WE IN SEPTTEL (NOTAL, POSSIBLE PLO BACKLASH AS
RESULT OF SUCCESSFUL SYRIAN SQUEEZE PLAY ON PALESTINIAN POSITIONS
THROUGHOUT LEBANON. IN THIS SCENARIO, PLO MIGHT CHOOSE TO USE WEST
BEIRUT AS KIND OF FINAL REDOUBT. WAKEFIELD WANTS TO

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PLAY IT AS SAFE AS POSSIBLE, AND SO HE HAS SUGGESTED THAT FCO

CONSIDER CLOSING BRITISH EMBASSY HERE WELL BEFORE THE POSSIBLE DELUGE.

2. ASIDE FROM FACT THAT CLOSING AMERICAN EMBASSY IN LEBANON HAS CONSIDERABLY MORE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND ALSO IMPLICATIONS (E.G. FUTURE OF AUB AND AUH) THAN CLOSING OF BRITISH EMBASSY,, I DO NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE SECURITY AND POLITICAL SITUATION WARRANTS CLOSING OF THIS EMBASSY AT THIS TIME. SCENARIO DESCRIBED ABOVE IS PROBABLY REMOTE AND, IN ANY CASE, I DON'T THINK IT IS IMMINENT. WE MUST, HOWEVER, KEEP ON OUR TOES AND BE PREPARED TO TAKE RAPID ANTICIPATORY ACTION IF WE SEE SITUATION MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION, I HAVE ALREADY RECOMMENDED ONE DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE WE MIGHT TAKE IN SEPTTEL.

3. WHAT WE ARE DOING IS TO TAKE ANOTHER HARD LOOK AT SIZE OF EMBASSY STAFF AND TO DETERMINE WHETHER WE SHOULD NOT CUT FURTHER BEYOND REDUCTIONS THAT WE ARLREADY RECOMMENDED TO DEPT LAST WEEK IN BEIRUT 5853. AS REPORTED IN BEIRUT 5987, WE HAVE ALREADY CONSOLIDATED LIVING QUARTERS OF MOST STAFF MEMBERS IN EMBASSY, WITH HANDFUL OF OTHERS LIVING IN TWO NEARBY APARTMENT BUILDINGS.

4. WHILE I WILL BE GIVING MY ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION IN SEPARATE MESSAGES, LET ME SAY HERE THAT I THINK SYRIANS ARE GOING TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE TACTIC OF EXTENDED BLOCKADE, COMBINED POSSIBLY WITH POLITICAL ACTION WITH PLO, BEFORE ATTACKING WEST BEIRUT. SYRIANS OBVIOUSLY ARE ALREADY FOLLOWING POLICY OF ATTEMPTING TO CHOKe OFF WEST BEIRUT, BOTH IN TERMS OF ARMS SUPPLIES AS WELL AS BASIC NECESSITIES SUCH AS GASOLINE AND FOODSTUFFS. THEY HOPE THEREBY TO SERIOUSLY WEAKEN CAPABILITY OF PLO AND LEBANESE LEFTIST GROUPS TO CONTINUE THEIR RESISTANCE IN WEST BEIRUT.

5. THIS, OF COURSE, AFFECTS US TOO, AND WE ARE CAREFULLY INVENTORYING OUR SUPPLIES AND ASSESSING FUTURE AVAILABILITIES. FOR MOMENT WE ARE DOING OKAY AND EXPECT NO PROBLEMS FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER THREE-FOUR WEEKS. SECOND FIRE AT SIDON AT REFINERY (FROM SYRIAN ARTILLERY FIRE) POSES REAL THREAT OF SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF GASOLINE AND FUEL OIL, AND FUTURE OF THE EMBASSY OBVIOUSLY WILL DEPEND ON ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE OUR GENERATOR.

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6. MEANWHILE, URGENTLY REQUEST DEPT AUTHORIZE STAFF REDUCTIONS PROPOSED BEIRUT 5853, SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN IMMEDIATELY TO SEND THESE PEOPLE OUT--HOPEFULLY BY MIDDLE OF NEXT WEEK.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE171437
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O:RBELL
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760267-0070
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760770/aaaacjth.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 LONDON 10703
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 FEB 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <09 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH CONCERN OVER DETERIORATING SITUATION IN LEBANON
TAGS: AEMR, PINS, PORS, UK, LE, US, (WAKEFIELD, PETER), (SEELYE, TALCOTT W)
To: USCINCEUR MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006